

HOUSE RESOLUTION 162

By Shaw

A RESOLUTION to honor and celebrate the dedication of a historical marker for Clarke Training School in Mt. Pleasant, Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the fabric of Tennessee history is a rich tapestry of dates, places, people and events which call to us to honor those who went before and rightfully acknowledge those institutions that served generations by providing educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, one such facility was Clarke Training School of Mt. Pleasant, Tennessee, established in 1922, which was the first public African American school in Maury County and whose purpose was to build citizenship and prepare its youth for various pursuits in life; and

WHEREAS, built on land purchased from the Petrified Bone Mining Company in 1918, the school opened in 1922 with a total of 350 students in a building comprised of four rooms and an auditorium that served as a combined high school and elementary school; and

WHEREAS, money for the school building had been raised through the efforts of a group of African American men, Joseph Worley, Andrew Polk Smith and Finn Wray, who led the fundraising charge during the early 1920's and saw a total of \$3,800 contributed by the African American community and another \$3,000 by the Maury County government; and

WHEREAS, Mt. Pleasant Colored School, as it was then known, offered vocational education for young men and home economics for young ladies; special instruction was offered in music, art and drama for talented students. The school building was equipped with a manual training shop, a home economics room, and a library; and

WHEREAS, expanded in 1928 at a cost of \$6,600, the school received funds from the legendary Julius Rosenwald Fund, the local African American citizens and both the City of Mt. Pleasant and Maury County; and

WHEREAS, in 1930, at a school board meeting, Dr. C.Y. Clarke stated that funding of \$800 was guaranteed for the maintenance of a training school at Mt. Pleasant Colored High School through D.S. Tanner, State Agent, if “the jeans work continued”, an apparent piece work extension of the local textile mills used to both teach the students as well as bring income to the school; and

WHEREAS, in 1931, the name of Mt. Pleasant Colored School was changed to Clarke Training School by unanimous vote of the Board of Education as a tribute to Dr. C. Y. Clarke, who was interested in providing education opportunities for all youth and played an important role in the establishment of the school; and

WHEREAS, with an ever-increasing enrollment, Clarke Training School expanded in 1942 with the purchase of additional land from Petrified Bone Mining Company that was utilized to establish sports programs such as track, football and volleyball and soon a full fledged athletics program was culminated in a state championship basketball team; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Clarke Training School continued to grow with additional teaching staff, equipment, classrooms for elementary students, an expanded library, a new cafeteria and a gymnasium. The G.I. benefits program enabled the school to provide vocational education opportunities to veterans from Columbia, Lawrenceburg, West Point and neighboring towns, which improved the industrial arts program dramatically; and

WHEREAS, receiving accreditation in the 1950’s, the school added a science department, resurrected the basketball program with a new gymnasium, added lights to the football field, and formed its first marching band, “The Pride and Joy of Mt. Pleasant”, who took the field in 1956 in blue and gold uniforms; and

WHEREAS, in 1962, the school was renamed Clarke Elementary and High School and in 1969, Clarke High School graduated its last class as a long-awaited result of the Supreme Court decision on the desegregation of schools in Brown v. Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, Clarke Training School enjoyed the benefit of being led by many excellent and dedicated Principals during its history, including Mrs. Annie Marie Biffle, Professor Albert Sampson Brown, Professor Jones, Professor George A. Thompson, Professor Herman C. Griffith, Professor W. R. Greenfield, Professor James E. Farrell, and Mr. Wilburn Gardner; and

WHEREAS, Clarke Training School enjoyed the services of numerous special individuals, teachers, educators and staff over the years who worked diligently on its behalf such as Mrs. Johnnie B. Fulton and Mrs. Ruby Aegle; and

WHEREAS, during its forty-nine year existence Clarke provided its graduates with the skills to make great contributions to their communities. It represented what can be done when everyone, black and white, industry and business, merchant and government, band together for the greater good of all to build a school; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby honor and commend the erection of a historical marker for Clarke Training School in Mt. Pleasant as a lasting tribute to its decades of outstanding educational services to the citizens of Mt. Pleasant and Maury County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of the Black Caucus are especially proud to pay tribute to Clarke Training School, joining with the former students, staff, faculty and friends of Clarke Training School in a celebration of its legacy at the dedication of the historical marker on July 3, 2005.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.